

PRESIDENT MOUL PRESIDING

PRESIDENT MOUL: Would the senators please check in. The house is under call. Senator Robinson, please check in. Senator Abboud, Senator Avery, please check in. Senator Landis, Senator Lindsay, please check in and Senator Haberman. Senator Wesely, for closing.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President and members. I want to ask you to please consider very carefully this amendment. It means a great deal to a great many Nebraskans. We're talking about over 5,000 people in the State of Nebraska that are out there, all of whom to qualify for the medically needy caretaker relative coverage must be, number one, from a poor family; number two, must have children. Nothing else will allow you in. Now these people are poor, but they are usually people that are working, 80 percent are out there working, but still with low-income wages, part-time work, no benefits, they can't have any health insurance possible or they won't qualify for Medicaid. But they are trying to work, they are trying to get ahead, they are trying to contribute to society and yet they're not able to keep their head above water in order to keep health coverage without Medicaid. So these are individuals that are poor, but not so poor they qualify for ADC. They also may have child support payments. Again, another thing we want to encourage is child support payments. If they didn't get the child support payments that may put them over the top to qualify for this program, but not qualify for ADC, you know, is that what we want to encourage? Do we want to discourage people from working? Do we want to discourage people from getting child support payments? I don't think so. This program has been in place since 1965 because it made sense. It made sense so much that it was mandatorily covered until the year 1981. There they decided that more flexibility of the states was in order on Medicaid, not because it wasn't a good program, but because they wanted to let the states have more flexibility. So in '81 they went to nonmandatory coverage of this and Nebraska recognized the importance and for 12 more years kept the program. For 28 years Nebraska has said, look, we don't want to discourage individuals who want to go out and earn some income from totally losing their chance to have Medicaid cover their medical needs. I think it was good policy then, it's good policy today and the impact is a much greater one than any of us can imagine unless we can visualize ourselves in those shoes. And on the back of the one handout that I've got for you, and I hope you'll take a